

Addressing Neighborhood Vitality and

In many cities larger than Lincoln, the flight of middle and upper class citizens can be partly attributed to the lack of support services in the core neighborhoods. Citizens not only want safe core neighborhoods with good housing units, but also want close proximity to nearby churches, parks, recreation, grocery stores, medical services, retailing and community services. Given people's busy lives, minimizing travel time and conflicts becomes important considerations for people choosing where to live. In larger cities, newer areas provide not only newer housing opportunities but also more opportunities for these other neighborhood support activities.

Lincoln is starting to see a similar trend. Lincoln's historic core neighborhoods have witnessed the departure of many churches, grocery stores, medical services and jobs. The only new retailing opportunities in some neighborhoods are new gas convenience stores, pawn shops and fast check cashing facilities. Older neighborhoods in Lincoln are struggling with stagnation or the disappearance of key neighborhood support services, which makes it difficult for inner city neighborhoods to attract new families and individuals and retain existing residents.

As a general rule, Lincoln's central neighborhood residents do not want their neighborhoods to mimic newer edge areas. Rather, the historic neighborhoods want to maintain and build from their fine attributes, including downtown, higher education, entertainment, diverse cultures, historic places, architectural style and large tree canopies.

Trying to maximize the historic core's strength while addressing its weaknesses has been a major theme of the community revitalization efforts during the Antelope Valley process. In fact, "Neighborhood Vitality" received the highest community priority of the eight Antelope Valley Purposes and Needs. In turn, the three Partners and the Advisory Committee have spent a considerable amount of effort developing community revitalization strategies. Six of these strategies have been included in the Phase 1 Projects list to be implemented in the next six to 10 years:

- Neighborhood Wrap Around Centers
- Recreation: New Northeast Park & Expanded Trago Park
- Trails: New Downtown/University Trail Loop
- Closer to Home
- New and Rehab Housing Opportunities
- East Downtown: new supermarket, retailing, housing and employment centers.

1. Neighborhood Wrap-Around Centers: A Key Neighborhood Component

What is a "wrap-around center"? Some people have compared a wrap-around center to a neighborhood community center, a school, a cultural center, a health care facility, a recreation facility, child care center, job training center, a one-stop social service center. Any and all the above can be true.

A wrap-around center is designed for the particular neighborhood needs and is typically physically housed in an existing building with several complementary program activities

"wrapped around" a primary core use, such as a school or community center. Wrap-around centers create efficiencies by having several activities and agencies located and working together to provide coordinated community services at a single location. By co-locating many complementary services and programs, an existing building can be utilized from early in the morning until late at night, seven days a week, twelve months out of the year, thus providing a more convenient location to the users, while saving operational and building costs.

The Amended Draft Single Package shows five proposed wrap-around centers:

- Elliott Elementary School
- North 27th Street/Holdrege Community Center (former furniture store area)
- Clyde T. Malone Community Center
- Indian/Armory Center
- Historic Whittier Junior High School

The five wrap-around centers are strategically located in neighborhoods that community based agencies already serve and are also on hiker/biker trails to encourage walking and bicycle access. Wrap-around services could include job training, literacy programs, childcare, computer literacy programs, tutoring, library services, year-round meal provision, expanded recreation opportunities, health care, parent support groups, police substations, social service offices, adult care, senior centers and other community events.

After the community prioritized the wrap-around center concept in the Antelope Valley Study, the City of Lincoln and Lincoln Public Schools commissioned a community study of the wrap-around concept in the spring of 1998 and established a five-phase framework for developing wrap-around centers. Community groups are actively developing wrap-around center proposals for Elliott School, N. 27th Street & Holdrege, and the Malone Center.

2. Recreation: New Northeast Park & Expanded Trago Park

Based upon several criteria, Lincoln's central neighborhoods are under served when it comes to recreational opportunities. In response, the Amended Draft Single Package would add a new 33-acre Northeast Park to serve the residents of the Clinton, University Place, Hartley and other area neighborhoods. The proposed location is south of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad tracks and north of Leighton Avenue, between North 28th and 33rd Streets. The John Dietrich bike-way runs along the south and east edges of the proposed park, and would connect to a new trail along Dead Mans Run north to the Salt Creek and Superior Street trails. The Amended Draft Single Package roadway configuration in this area would provide park access on the north side by extending Huntington Avenue westward from 33rd Street.

The park proposal includes several programmed recreation activities, including multiple softball and soccer fields, a picnic pavilion, restrooms, a playground, sand volleyball courts, and multi-use sports courts that would accommodate tennis or basketball.

The construction of the North-South

Roadway as a Phase 1 Project would displace three UNL softball fields near 19th & Vine Streets. The Northeast Park could provide replacement softball fields for these lost UNL fields. The City Parks and Recreation Department and UNL have already outlined a collaborating effort to cost share the operation and maintenance of this new park site.

Trago Park already is a fine eight-acre park providing recreational opportunities to area residents. Recently, the City has added public restrooms and other new park amenities at Trago Park in coordination with the Antelope Valley Study.

Under the Amended Draft Single Package, Trago Park would be connected to the new downtown/University loop trail network and the park expanded south to "O" Street, adding approximately eight new acres. Not only would the expanded Trago Park provide an attractive corridor for the storm-water conveyance, parallel trail and new recreational opportunities, but the expanded park would also benefit the abutting neighborhood and encourage redevelopment opportunities.

3. Trails: New Downtown/University Trail Loop

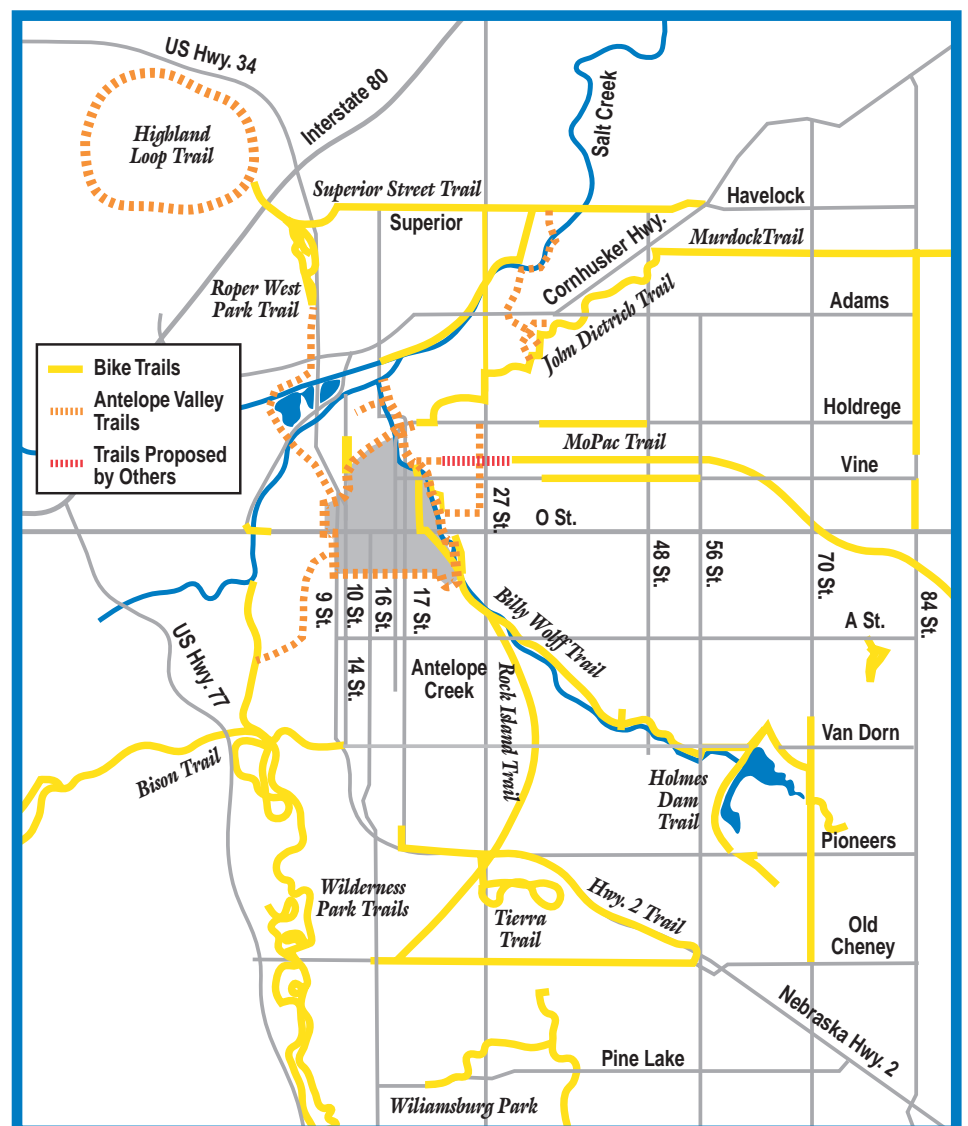
Over the last 12 years, Lincoln has been busy developing a trail network that is now nationally acclaimed. The recreational and commuter trail network connects many of Lincoln's neighborhoods, schools and parks. More new local and regional trail miles are added yearly. Most people would agree the

trail network has definitely added to Lincoln's quality of life. Despite this success, many of the busiest trails head toward the Downtown/University area but often stop many blocks short of the final destination, causing safety concerns when bicyclists have to compete with motor vehicles on narrow and busy streets or compete with pedestrians on four-foot wide city sidewalks.

A new trail loop would be constructed around the edges of Downtown and University areas as part of the Phase 1 Projects. The new Downtown/University loop trail would act as a "hub" connecting the "spokes" of four of Lincoln's key existing trails: Rock Island/Billy Wolff, John Dietrich, MoPac and Salt Creek. These connections would require short extensions of the existing trails to link them to the new hub trail. The extensions and cost estimate are included in the Amended Draft Single Package.

The eastern side of the new loop trail would be formed by the new off street trail that will be incorporated into the expansion of Trago Park and the new landscaped Antelope Creek waterway. The loop would then travel around the University on its northern edge and proceed west and south through the Haymarket area. Next, the loop trail would turn east at "G" Street, using the wide right-of-way. The trail would complete its loop near Lincoln High School where it would connect with the new waterway trail and the existing Rock Island/Billy Wolff trails.

In addition to providing a hub connection for the existing Rock Island, John Dietrich, MoPac and Salt Creek trails, the new



Other Community Revitalization Opportunities

loop trail would be able to provide better connections to other proposed trail expansions. A new trail is going to be constructed next year through the new baseball and softball complex and over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe tracks into the Haymarket area. This new pedestrian way will provide a link to the new loop trail and to the Oak Lake area and eventually extending up through the I-180 park and into the Highland/Fallbrook/Superior Street trails.

Fund raising efforts are underway to extend the MoPac (Husker Link) to the University area, which would add a major connection between the loop trail and East Lincoln. South Salt Creek neighborhood residents are discussing a new trail connection through their neighborhood, which again could link to the new loop trail. A new Bison Trail connection to Pioneer Park is in the final stages, which could provide a connection between the new loop trail and Southwest Lincoln.

The Amended Draft Single Package also proposes an on-street loop trail providing needed neighborhood access to Malone and Clinton neighborhoods and a better-defined neighborhood boundary between residential and commercial land uses. The new trail route would start at the Downtown/University loop trail and travel east along "Q" Street and then turn north along N. 26th Street. This route would then connect to both the MoPac/Husker Link and the John Dietrich Bikeway.

4.

Closer to Home and Housing Strategies

As part of the Antelope Valley process, the three Partners sponsored a series of neighborhood workshops to encourage the eleven Antelope Valley neighborhoods to define neighborhood vitality strategies for the collective core as well as each individual neighborhood. Often, these defined strategies are neither big-ticket items nor very glamorous, but do have an immediate impact to neighborhood safety, aesthetics and property values. These basic items can be accomplished in close proximity to peoples homes.

Therefore, they are often called "closer to home" strategies and include: Alley paving or re-rocking; sidewalk repairs; tree trimming, planting and removal; street repairs; park improvements/expansion; clean up trash and weeds; street and alley light improvements; fence and screening programs; street calming and abatement of cut-through traffic; dilapidated housing; affordable housing, high density issues; porch building program; neighborhood based retail; trails; lack of convenient public transportation; and vacant buildings and lots.

Meanwhile, the City of Lincoln has not waited for the completion of the Antelope Valley Study and has been working with priority neighborhoods in implementing several new closer to home initiatives in addition to the City's traditional housing and community development programs.

As part of the Antelope Valley effort, Congressman Doug Bereuter assisted the City in securing a \$750,000 federal grant. The City then combined portions of the federal grant with available tax increment financing (TIF)

funds to carry out closer to home strategies in the Clinton, Malone and Hawley Historical areas. Last year efforts totaled approximately \$800,000 and included:

- 39 alleys graveled
- 3 streets resurfaced
- 25 blocks of curbs replaced on both sides of the street
- 68 blocks of replaced sidewalks

The Closer to Home Exterior Repair (CHED) housing program was also developed and committed \$400,000 of funds including monies from the Bereuter assisted federal grant and the State of Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Fund. These funds were made available to Clinton, Hawley, Hartley, Malone and North Bottoms neighborhoods and resulting activities include:

- 7 homes have received extensive repairs
- 10 homes are under construction
- 25 homes are scheduled to receive repairs
- 25 additional applications are being reviewed.

The Clean Neighborhoods Program is another closer to home strategy. The City has purchased tools to assist neighborhoods in self-help clean up projects. The Malone, Hawley, Hartley, Clinton and North Bottoms neighborhood associations can check out these tools.

In addition, the City of Lincoln Urban Development Department has assisted or is assisting Malone, Clinton, North Bottoms, Everett, South Salt Creek, Woods Park and Near South and Downtown Neighborhood in developing focus area plans that particularly define specific sets of housing and community revitalization strategies for the participating neighborhood. In turn, these plans will be funded with federal and city funds along with self help voluntary efforts by the neighborhoods.

5.

New and Rehab Housing Opportunities

New or expanded housing construction is another Antelope Valley strategy. Public participants indicate the need to provide new and rehabilitated housing opportunities in the area for low, middle and high income families and individuals. As part of the neighborhood workshops, the goal to maintain and increase the number of single-family residences received a high priority. In the flood plain, many owners have not been able to make housing improvements. Building The New Antelope Creek Channel will narrow the flood plain, thus opening these areas to housing renewal. Neighborhoods Inc. has also been busy strengthening neighborhoods by funding loans to many homeowners in the Antelope Valley Study area. Presently, Neighborhoods, Inc. is undertaking a strategic planning process to see how it might be able to provide expanded housing and related services to the core neighborhoods.

At the outer edges of these neighborhoods, the Antelope Valley Study proposes higher density housing, such as condominiums, loft apartments and attractive row houses. One possible expanded housing location is along 18th Street, north of "K" Street (the Near South neighborhood) to the UNL City Campus. Additional areas for consideration of higher residential densities exist east of

the new North-South Roadway and on both sides of the attractive new waterway.

The proposed budget for the Phase 1 Projects also includes funds to help the City Urban Development Department relocate viable homes that would be acquired as part of the waterway and roadway right of way acquisition process. Study participants believe some of these older homes can successfully be relocated as in-fill housing on vacant lots and provide complementary style housing.

6.

East Downtown: New water walk, supermarket, retailing, housing and employment centers

Most citizens view the eastern edge of downtown to be 17th Street. However, many blocks of downtown businesses and downtown B-4 zoned land are located east of 17th Street. To many citizens this east downtown "auto land" area is unattractive, has inadequate traffic circulation, and does not strengthen the rest of downtown, Haymarket area and UNL. The Antelope Valley Phase 1 Projects attempt to address these concerns.

The combination and location of the proposed waterway and North-South Roadway would be the first major wave of improvements. The new aesthetic waterway would remove the threat of the designated 100-year flood from generally 19th to 25th Streets. The construction of a

landscaped boulevard with wide medians along the 19th Street corridor would increase the traffic flow and provide business visibility. The removal of the designated flood plain on the UNL campus would allow the University to implement its master plan, which shows seven future research buildings located close to the Beadle Center. These new university activities will border the east downtown area on the north and will further reinforce the opportunity for redevelopment and prosperity between traditional downtown and the new waterway. In addition, this enhanced research activity will attract venture capital to the city, benefiting Lincoln and the State.

If the east downtown area is given the proper attention and public improvement investments, it is anticipated the private sector would respond positively, like it did in the Haymarket area, by improving this east downtown area. After reviewing the Antelope Valley Study, early response by some of Lincoln's major building developers has been positive. The common message from these developers has been that the elected officials will have to commit to the new waterway and roadway so there is a level of confidence that the flooding

threat will be removed and traffic circulation improved before large private sector dollars will reinvest in the area.

An important concern is not to compete with the current Downtown, but to add to the range of Downtown opportunities. The proposed roadway and stormwater improvements are not the end, but the first steps to encourage additional private reinvestments. The Amended Draft Single Package envisions many new private sector redevelopment projects in this area in response to the Antelope Valley public investments.

Supermarket

Central Lincoln area residents have expressed a need for a new downtown supermarket. Market analysis and interviews with major supermarket chains confirm a supermarket would be successful in the east downtown area, near the proposed North-South Roadway and "O" Street. Contributing factors include the large projected traffic counts on the proposed North-South Roadway and "O" Street, the large UNL, downtown and core area populations living and working in the area, and the potential increased residential population attracted to the new housing



Design charette of proposed entrance feature at O Street.

opportunities. Depending upon the size and parking needs for a new supermarket, up to two blocks would have to be assembled.

Market Place "P" Street

One of this community's major architectural assets is the former Rock Island train station, now owned and utilized by Union Bank. The old train station, a building listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is located between the proposed roadway and the waterway. The Antelope Valley plan envisions this structure along with new retail, office and housing development in the immediate vicinity helping to anchor a mixed use development in the east downtown area, while encouraging Market Place ("P" Street) entertainment activities to grow towards the new waterway. Eventually, Market Place could be anchored by the historic Burlington train station (Lincoln Station) in the Haymarket and the historic Union Bank/Rock Island train station near the new waterway, all located immediately south of and paralleling the UNL campus.